

Columbia Democrat.

"I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man."—Thomas Jefferson

H. WEBB, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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SOUTH SIDE OF MAIN, A FEW DOORS BELOW MARKET-STREET.

TERMS:

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COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

NOVEMBER 28, 1846.

HIGHLY INTERESTING FROM THE PACIFIC.

Operations of Col. Fremont in Upper California.

The Washington Union contains a lengthy and very interesting letter from Col. Thomas H. Benton, relating to the operations of Col. Fremont, during the last winter and spring, in Upper California, together with others from Col. Fremont, giving a graphic and interesting account of his movements. B's letter is accompanied by several columns of official correspondence between the authorities of Upper California, and Thomas O. Larkin Esq. our Consul at Monterey, relating to Col. Fremont and the attempt to drive him from that department, in the early part of the year, by force of arms. Our limits force brevity upon us, so that we are compelled to omit even the substance of these letters, but it is not unknown to our readers that the appearance of Col. Fremont and his party, in that department of California, early in the year, gave anything but satisfaction to the authorities, and this correspondence between our Consul and Governor Castro, resulted from a proclamation issued by the latter peremptorily commanding Col. F. to withdraw with his men from the country. From the letter of Col. Benton, we learn that after Col. F. had crossed the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada of the Alta California, he left his men upon the frontier, an hundred miles from Monterey and went alone to that city to explain his object and wishes in person to Gov. Castro. The interview was entirely satisfactory, and resulted in permission being granted him by the Governor to winter in the valley of San Joaquin, where there was plenty of game for his men and grass for his horses. Scarcely had he arrived in this valley with his men when reports began to reach him from all quarters that the Governor was raising the province against him—he was warned of his danger by our Consul—the settlers proposed to join him but he refused their assistance—and taking position on the summit of the Sierra, thirty miles from and overlooking Monterey, he awaited the assaults. From this position he could clearly discern the movements of the force under Gov. Castro, but after all their threats they only approached the camp and Col. Fremont not finding himself attacked, and determined to avoid collision, then determined to retire, and to proceed to Oregon, on his intended route of the valley of the Sacramento, the Talmath lake, and the valley of the Wahlamath river. Accordingly, about the 10th of March, he left his position on the Sierra and descended into the valley of the San Joaquin, and commenced his march by slow and easy stages of four and six miles a day, towards Oregon. The Governor after his return from the evacuated camp on Sierra, issued a proclamation denouncing Col. F. and his men as a band of robbers and highwaymen, and it appears they were not even permitted to retire without further molestation.

We copy from Col. Benton's letter:

"The first letter that we received from Capt. Fremont, after his withdrawal from

Sierra, and from the valley of the San Joaquin, is dated the first day of April, in latitude 40 on the Sacramento river; and though written merely to inform Mrs. Fremont of his personal concerns becomes important in a public point of view, on account of subsequent events in June, and July, by showing, that on the first of April he was on his way to Oregon—that he had abandoned all intention of returning through any part of California—would cross the Rocky mountains through the Northern Pass on the line between the Upper, or Kettle Falls of the Columbia, and the Great Falls of the Missouri and be in the United States in September. This shows that he had at the time, no idea of the events in which he was subsequently involved, and that he had abandoned the cherished field of his intended scientific researches for the express purpose of avoiding all offence to the Mexican authorities. Of the events in the valley of the San Joaquin and the camp on the Sierra, he speaks a few words, without detail, but descriptive of his condition, characteristic of his prudence in not compromising his country & worthy to be repeated in his own language. He says: 'The Spaniards were somewhat rude and inhospitable below, and ordered me out of the country, after having given me permission to winter there. My sense of duty did not permit me to fight them, but we retired slowly and growingly before a force of 2 or 4 hundred men, and two pieces of artillery. Without the shadow of a cause, the governor suddenly raised the whole country against me, issuing a false and scandalous proclamation. Of course, I did not dare to compromise the United States, against which appearances would have been strong; but though it was in my power to increase my party by Americans, I refrained from committing a solitary act of hostility or impropriety.' His next letter is dated the 14th of May, and informs me that, in his progress to Oregon, he found himself and party unexpectedly attacked by the Talmath Indians—the most warlike of that quarter—had lost five men in killed and wounded—and lost expected to be in the United States in the month of September.'

This was the last letter received from Col. Fremont until the following, of July 25th, from Monterey, and which was brought by Commodore Sloat. It is a plain statement of his movements, and will be read with deep interest. The letter of Col. Benton goes into a lengthy and able review of his conduct against the falsehoods gaseous, and of Gen. Castro. The Union truly says: 'Nothing could be more moderate at first—nothing more decided, when he was assailed by the Mexicans—more manly, more heroic than his conduct.'

Private letter from Colonel Fremont to Senator Benton, dated Monterey of the Alta California July 25, 1846.

My Dear Sir:—When Mr. Gillespie overtook me in the middle of May, we were encamped on the northern shore of the Greater Talmath Lake. Snow was falling steadily and heavily in the mountains which entirely surround and dominate the elevated valley region into which we had penetrated; in the east and north and west barriers absolutely impassable barred our road, we had no provisions, our animals were already feeble, and while any other way was open, I could not bring myself to attempt such a doubtful enterprise as a passage of these unknown mountains in the dead of winter. Every day the snow was falling, and in the face of the depressing influence exercised on the people by the loss of our men, and the unpromising appearance of things, I judged it inexpedient to pursue our journey farther in this direction, and determined to retrace my steps, and carry out the views of the government by reaching the frontier on the line of the Colorado river. I had scarcely reached the lower river, when General Castro, then in the north (at Sonoma, in the department of Sonoma, north of the bay of San Francisco) commanded by Gen. Vallejo, declared his determination immediately to proceed against me, and after defeating me to proceed against the foreigners settled in the country

for whose expulsion an order had just been issued by the governor of the California. For these purposes Castro immediately assembled a force at the Mission of Santa Clara, a strong place on the northern shore of the Francisco bay. You will remember how grossly outraged and insulted we had already been by this officer; many in my own camp, and throughout the country thought that I should not have retreated in March last. I felt humiliated and humbled one of the main objects proposed by this expedition had been entirely defeated and it was the opinion of the officers of the squadron (so I was informed by Mr. Gillespie) that I could not again retreat consistently with any military reputation. Unable to procure supplies elsewhere I had sent by Mr. Gillespie, to Capt. Montgomery, commanding the United States ship of war Portsmouth, then lying at Monterey, a small requisition for such supplies as were indispensably necessary to leave the valley; and my animals were now in such a state that I could not get out of the valley, without reaching the country which lies on the west side of them in an entirely destitute condition.

Having carefully examined my position, and foreseeing, I think, clearly, all the consequences which may eventuate to me from such a step, I determined to take such active & anticipatory measures as should seem to me most expedient to protect my party and justify my own character. I was well aware of the grave responsibility which I assumed, but I also determined that having concluded to do so, I would assume it and its consequences fully and entirely and go through with the business completely to the end. I regret that, by a sudden emergency, I have only an hour for writing to all friends, and that therefore from the absence of detail, what I say to you will not be clearly understood. Castro's first measure was an attempt to incite the Indian population of the Soaquin and Sacramento valleys, and the neighboring mountains, to burn the crops of the foreigners and otherwise proceed immediately against them. These Indians are extremely numerous, and the success of this measure would have been very destructive, but he failed entirely. On the 6th of June I decided on the course which I would pursue, and immediately concerted my operations with the foreigners inhabiting the Sacramento valley. A few days afterwards, on of Castro's officers, with a party of 144, attempted to pass a drove of 200 horses, from Sonoma to Santa Clara, via New Helvetia, with the avowed purpose of bringing troops into the country: On the 11th, they were surprised at daylight on the Consumme river, by a party of 12 from my camp. The horses were taken, but they (the men) were dismissed without injury. At daybreak on the 15th, the military fort of Sonoma was taken by surprise, with 9 brass pieces of artillery, 250 stands of muskets, some other arms, and a quantity of ammunition. Gen. Vallejo, his brother, (Capt. Vallejo) Colonel Greundon, and some others, were taken prisoners, and placed at New Helvetia, a fortified post under my command. In the meantime a launch had reached New Helvetia with stores from the ship Portsmouth, now lying at Yerba Buena, on Francisco bay. News of Gen. Castro's proceedings against me in March, had reached Commodore Sloat at Mazatlan at the end of last month, and he had immediately despatched the ship Portsmouth to Monterey, with general instructions to protect American interests in California.

These enterprises accomplished, I proceeded to the American settlements on the Sacramento, and the Rio de los Americanos, to obtain reinforcements of men and rifles. The information brought by Mr. Gillespie to Captain Montgomery, in relation to my position, induced that officer

to immediately proceed to Yerba Buena, whence he had despatched his launch to me. I immediately wrote to him, by the return of the boat, describing to him fully my position and intentions, in order that he might not, by supposing me to be acting under orders from our government, unwittingly commit himself in affording me other than such assistance as his instructions would authorize him naturally to offer an officer charged with an important public duty; or, in line, to any citizens of the U. S.

Information having reached me from the commanding officer at Sonoma, that his post was threatened with an attack by a force under Gen. Castro, I raised camp on the American fork on the afternoon of the 22d, and, accompanied by Mr. Gillespie, at 2 in the morning of the 25th reached Sonoma, with 80 mounted riflemen, having marched 90 miles. Our people still held the place, only one division of Castro's force, a squadron of cavalry, number 70 men, and commanded by Joaquin de la Torre [one of his best officers,] having succeeded in crossing the straits. [Francisco bay.] This force had attacked an advance party of twenty Americans, and [was] defeated with the loss two killed and two or three wounded. The Americans lost none. This was an unexpected check to the Californians; who had announced their intentions to defeat our people without firing a gun; to beat out their brains with their 'lapedros,' and destroy them 'con cueri los puros.' They were led to use this expression from the circumstance that a few days previous they had captured two of our men (an express) and after wounding had bound them to trees, and cut them to pieces while alive, with an exaggeration of cruelty, which no Indian would be capable of. In a few days de la Torre was driven from the country, having barely succeeded in effecting his escape across the straits, the guns [six large and handsome pieces] spiked at the fort on the south side of entrance to Francisco bay, and communication with the opposite side entirely broken off, the boats and launches being either destroyed or in our possession. Three of Castro's party having landed on the Sonoma side in advance, were killed near the beach; and beyond this there was no loss either side. In all these proceedings Mr. Gillespie acted with me.

We reached Sonoma again on the evening of July 4, and in the morning called the people together, and spoke to them in relation to the position of the country, advising a course of operations which was unanimously adopted—California was declared independent, the country put under martial law; the force organized, and officers elected. A pledge binding themselves to support the measures, and obey their officers, was signed by those present. The whole was placed under my direction. Several officers, from the Portsmouth were present at this meeting. Leaving Captain Grigby, with fifty men in command of Sonoma, I left that place on the 6th, and reached my encampment on the American Fork in three days. Before we arrived at that place, General Castro had evacuated Santa Clara, which he had been engaged in fortifying, and with a force of about 400 men, and 2 pieces of artillery, commenced his retreat upon St. John's, a fortified post having 8 pieces of artillery, principally brass. On the evening of the 10th we were elevated by the arrival of an express from Capt. Montgomery, with the information that Commodore Sloat had hoisted the flag of the United States at Monterey, and taken possession of the country. Capt. Montgomery had hoisted the flag at Yerba Buena, and sent

one to Sonoma, to be hoisted at that place. One also was sent to the officer commanding at New Helvetia, requesting that it might be hoisted at this post.

Independence and the flag of the U. States are synonymous terms to the foreigners here, [the northern, which is the stronger part, particularly,] and accordingly I directed the flag to be hoisted with a salute next morning. The event produced great rejoicing among our people. The next day I received in express from Commodore Sloat, transmitting to me his proclamation, and directing me to proceed with the force under my orders to Monterey. The registered force, actually in arms, and under my orders, numbered two hundred and twenty riflemen, with one piece of field artillery, and ten men, in addition to the artillery of the garrison. We were on the eve of marching in pursuit of Castro when this intelligence arrived: accordingly I directed my march upon Monterey, where I arrived in the evening of 19th, with a command of 160 riflemen and one piece of artillery. I found also there Stockton in command of the frigate Congress, and Admiral Seymour, in command of her British majesty's ship Collingwood, of eighty guns. I have been badly interrupted, and shall scarcely be able to put you in full possession of occurrences.

To come briefly to conclusion. Commodore Sloat has transferred the squadron with California and its appurtenances into the hands of Commodore Stockton, who has resolved to make good the possession of California. This officer approves entirely of the course pursued by myself and Mr. Gillespie, who, I repeat, has been hand in hand with me in this business. I received this morning, from Commodore Stockton, a commission of Major in the U. S. army, retaining command of my battalion, to which a force of 80 men will be attached. We are under orders to embark to-morrow morning, on board the Cyane sloop of war, and will disembark at San Diego, immediately in the rear of Castro. He is now at the Puebla de los Angeles, an interior city, with a force of about 500 men, supposed to be increasing. The design is to attack him with my force at that place. He has there seven or eight pieces of artillery.

Commodore Sloat who goes home by way of Panama, promises to hand over this to you immediately on his arrival at Washington, to which he goes direct. It is my intention to leave this country, if it is within the bounds of possibility, at the end of August. I could then succeed in crossing the Rocky Mountains—later it would not be possible on account of the snow; and by that time a territorial government will be in operation here. Yours, very truly,

J. C. FREMONT.

Hon. Thomas H. Benton,
U. S. Senate, Washington city, D. C.

COL. FREMONT.

A correspondent of the New York Mirror furnishes the following authentic and carefully prepared account of Col. Fremont, of the U. S. Army the celebrated explorer of Oregon and California:

Col. Fremont, whose celebrated explorations in the furthest West are now the theme of universal applause, is a native of South Carolina, the son of a widow, and the architect of his own fortunes. Left an orphan at four years of age with a brother and sister younger than himself, his mother, until he was seventeen, provided for his support and education; at that age he began to provide for himself, and for those connected with him. For three years he taught mathematics, perfecting his own education, and giving all his earnings, beyond his necessary support, to his mother and the two younger children. At the age of

twenty, his skill in mathematics procured him employment on the rail-road explorations undertaken by the State of South Carolina, to connect the Atlantic ocean and the Ohio river, at the two points of Charleston and Cincinnati and this gave him occupation in the mountainous region of North Carolina and Tennessee, and first inured him to mountain life, and led him to commence the scientific observations of the heavens and earth, that he has since extended over so vast a field. While engaged in this business, an increase was made by Congress in some branches of the regular army. General Jackson was the President of the United States, and directed one half of the new appointments to be taken from the class of citizens; and out of this class the young Fremont obtained a place among the junior officers of the Topographical Engineers. The wise and patriotic decision of General Jackson opened the door for this appointment, but it required the merit of the applicant to obtain it. The Topographical corps is eminently scientific and the young Fremont, never having been at the national Military Academy had to stand an examination before he could be appointed. A board of eminent officers examined him. He stood the test of this severe ordeal. He triumphed in his examination; and thus won his way to a place which the enlightened patriotism of Jackson had laid open to the competition of friendless merit. This was a first fruit—a rich one—of having been a teacher of mathematics. What an encouragement to young men who have to advance themselves by their own exertions!

No sooner was he appointed, than he went into active service in the field, and spent the first year in the Cherokee country in the topographical surveys, (under Captain Williams,) which the apprehended hostilities of the southern Indians rendered necessary to the expected military operations. The next year he was sent as an assistant to the celebrated astronomer Mr. Nicollet to the valley of the upper Mississippi and was engaged two years in that remote region in aiding that eminent savant in collecting the materials verifying the facts and in situating the seventy thousand meteorological observations upon which the great hydrographic and topographic map of Nicollet and Fremont was constructed and from which so many publishers of maps have copied 'contributions,' without acknowledging the source from which they came.

In 1842, Lieut. Fremont first became commander of a separate expedition, and explored the country between the Mississippi river and the Rocky mountains, to the South Pass and Fremont's Peak and the brief, modest, military and scientific report which he made of this exploration, immediately made his name known in Europe and America as one of the distinguished explorers of the age. In 1842-'44, he went upon his great expedition to Oregon and North California; he reported which, published by order of Congress, is now attracting universal attention. In 1845, he has gone upon his third expedition, determined upon a complete military and scientific exploration of all the vast and almost unknown regions between the Rocky mountains and the Pacific ocean, and between the Oregon river and the Gulf of California. This expedition is expected to continue near two years, and a successful result is looked to with the highest degree of interest by all the friends of science in America and in Europe.

Perhaps no man of his age, in any country, has gone through such an amount of labor and exertion of body and mind as Col. Fremont. From the age of twenty the canopy of Heaven has been his covering—the mountains and plains, the lakes and rivers, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf of Mexico to the head of the Mississippi, have been his home.—His military reconnaissance in which he was engaged, became also scientific explanations; and geography, botany, geology, astronomy,